

OBSERVATIONS ON THE WOUNDS
FROM THE CROWN OF THORNS

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Chapter XIII: How the Crown of Thorns not only encircled the Lord's head, but covered it all right up to the top.

Who looks upon the head of the Lord in the imprint of the holy Shroud, readily discerns that the punctures from the thorns not only made a circle around it; but continued right up to the summit, which makes it clearly evident that the crown was made of many coils which covered the whole head. In confirmation of this, all the Fathers affirm it; but in particular St. Bernard remarks that the whole head of the Lord was covered with wounds, with these words: *Sed ipsa etiam eius corona cruciatus est illi et mille puncturis speciosum eius caput divulgavit*. Which means: But even his crown was a torment to him and with a thousand punctures it lacerated his beautiful head. And St. Vincent not only describes a similar form of the crown, but also expressly attests that in seventy-two places it wounded the Lord's head, because it had the shape of a hat. With these words: *Et capiti eius imposuerunt coronam, quae eum in capite in septuaginta duobus locis crudeliter vulneravit; nam erat ad modum pilei*.

Thus Ezechiel prophesied when he said: *Corona tua circumligata sit tibi*.¹ And Job understood this, saying: *Tenuit cervicem meam, et confregit me*,² that is, That the crown clenched and wounded my head.

But from the words of St. Anselm in respect to the summit of the head, one clearly perceives that the crown was twined around every part of the Lord's head, injuring it with a thousand punctures; there where he says: *Mille puncturis verticem eius praetiosissimum vulneraverunt*. And it was said even more clearly and precisely by St. Brigitte in the revelation that she had, which says: *Inde vertex meus, et caput totum puncturis spinarum lacerabantur*. That is, Thorn punctures lacerated me on the top of my head and all over it. And in another place: *Cumque caput meum undique esset corona cruentatum, et undique sanguis flueret*. That is, Since my head was

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wounded all around, and blood poured from every part. To these recognized authorities can be added the testimony of many who have seen the very crown in France, and report that it has many circlets, forming a sort of helmet.

To see the Lord's head in the way that it is represented on the holy Shroud, how it is eaten up with punctures, symbolizes the Paschal lamb, of which God commanded that the head be eaten.³

To behold the spectacle of this King, crowned in this guise, the bride in the Canticle invited the daughters of Sion, saying: *Egredimini, et videte filiae Syon Regem Salomonem in diademate, quo coronavit eum Mater sua.*⁴ That is, Come forth, oh daughters of Sion, and see King Salomon with the crown with which his mother has crowned him. St. Bernard expounds upon this place, interpreting King Salomon to be Christ crowned with thorns. And St. Isidore considering the word, *Mater Sua, declares: In corona, qua coronavit eum Mater sua; idest coronam spineam capiti eius imposuit Synagoga.* Which means, With the crown, with which his Mother crowned him; that is, the crown of thorns put upon his head by the Synagogue.

But such cruelty was not enough for the Christ in distress, that the thorns should penetrate the head all around, lacerating all those most sensitive parts; to that was added also the mockery, and the jeering of the insolent soldiers, that after putting a reed in his hand and dressing him in purple, for greater disdain they scoffed him like a false King, veiling his face and taunting: Guess who hit you; thus fulfilling the prophecy of Ezechiel who said: *Faciem tuam velabis, et non videbis terram, quia portentum dedit to domui Israel.*⁵ That is, They will veil your face and you will not see the earth, because I have given you as a sign to the house of Israel. Samson was the symbol of this, derided by the Philistines, as we read in the book of Judges;⁶ and also David, insulted by Shimei, in the book of Kings.⁷

This derision was predicted by Jeremiah, when he said: *Factus sum illis in parabolam, et derisum.*⁸ That is, I have become a byword and laughing-stock for them.

In three attributes of royalty the Savior was mocked. In the purple, in the crown, and in the sceptre, according to the observation of Cardinal Hugo, who said: *Illuserunt Iesum in corona, in purpura, et in sceptro.* St. Jerome agrees, saying: *In clamys coccinea opera gentium, cruenta sustentat. In corona spinea, maledictum solvit antiquum. In calamo, venenata occidit animalia.* And farther on: *Siccum clamum tenebat in manu, ut sacrilegium scriberet Iudaeorum.* That is, With the purple garment he endured the blood and the filthy work of the Gentiles. With the crown of thorns he liberated them from the ancient malediction* and with the reed he killed the poisonous

* The curse of Gen. 3:18, *The earth ... will bring forth thorns and thistles.* To remove this curse, the King must carry the sign of it on his head.

animals. And to that he adds, that he held the quill in his hand, to write the sacrilege of the Jews. St. Hilary adds a fine insight, describing him King, as he really was, and says: *Caeso Domino, imponitur clamys coccinea, et vestis purpura, et arundo dexterae, et genu posito, adoratur*. That is, When the Lord had been scourged, they dressed him in a red garment, put the crown of thorns on his head, the reed in his hand, and with bended knee adored him; which shows that he is King (even though in the minds of the coarse soldiers he was a sham king) and for that reason it was not purple, but with cochineal that they clothed him, a color not dissimilar to purple, but much more degrading, as Baius observed; but the truth is, he was crowned King of all the Martyrs.

Contemplate here the devotion of the holy Virgin, how within her heart she felt like crying out to see the Lord, true Salomon, with the diadem with which he had been crowned. And going out to the dolorous spectacle, with what eyes she gazed upon the circle of thorns which wound around his head right up to the top! And weeping, she could have said with Job, They have taken me and broken my head. Then kissing his head in every part, [it seemed] as if she desired that from her eyes should flow tears in such abundance that they would wash every one of those wounds. Thus every devoted soul, looking upon the holy Shroud with pious love, could worthily mingle his blessed tears.

REFERENCES

1. Ezech. 24:17
2. Job 16:12
3. Ex. 12:9
4. Song of Songs 3:11
5. Ezech. 12:6
6. Judges 16
7. II Sam. 16:5
8. Jer. 24:9